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Letter dated 19 February 2009 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to refer to Security Council resolution 1856 (2008) of 22 December 2008. By that resolution, the Security Council requested me to ensure that the concept of operations and the rules of engagement for the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) are updated to bring them fully in line with the provisions of that resolution and to report to the Security Council and the troop-contributing countries.

The concept of operations and the rules of engagement were carefully reviewed by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and MONUC and have been revised to meet the requirements of the robust mandate of MONUC, as outlined in resolution 1856 (2008). The revised concept of operations provides the military component of MONUC with clear strategic objectives and end states. While highlighting the priority of protecting civilians, the concept of operations makes clear that the main area of focus is in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The revised concept of operations also takes into account tasks arising from the provisions of the Goma and Nairobi frameworks. It also provides the necessary flexibility to enable MONUC to react in a robust manner to the evolving realities on the ground. Additionally, and on the basis of the political objectives, the revised concept of operations provides the strategic military intent, conceptual employment of military forces and military tasks, as derived from the mandate.

The rules of engagement have also been extensively reviewed by MONUC and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, and critical aspects have been amended, including with regard to fire support, air-to-ground engagements, collateral damage and levels of authorization for the use of specific weapons systems. The aim of the revision was to clarify and to remove restrictive clauses on the terms for the use of force during the conduct of military operations, as outlined in the revised concept of operations.

In close consultation with MONUC, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations will continue to review on a regular basis the concept of operations and the rules of engagement to ensure that they adequately reflect the realities of the evolving situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, and to enable MONUC to carry out its robust mandate in the most effective manner.

(*Signed*) **Ban** Ki-moon

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